

SUMMARY REPORT

68TH ANNUAL MEETING

of the

SOUTHERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Little Rock, Arkansas | July 26 - 30, 2014



SOUTHERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
of
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

SEPTEMBER 2014



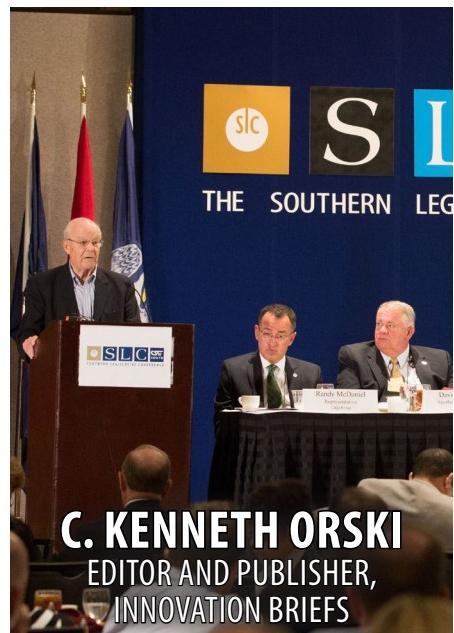
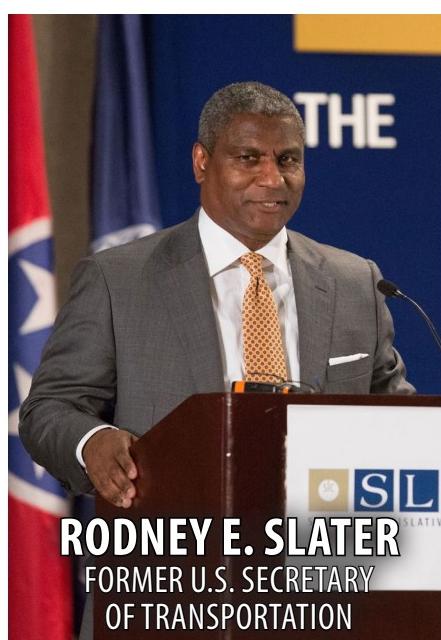
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During four days in July, meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas, legislators from across the South joined together with policy experts to discuss, review, and consider the opportunities that exist to bring prosperity and promise to states and communities in the region. In addition to presentations and dialogue on substantive issues, each SLC standing committee conducted a roundtable discussion and summary of legislative activities from the 2014 session, elected officers for the committee, and considered policy positions proposed for adoption by committee members and the Conference. Presentations from committee sessions, where available, and attendance lists for committee sessions can be found on the SLC website at www.slcatlanta.org/AR2014.

The meeting summaries in this report are condensed overviews of speaker presentations provided at sessions of the SLC standing committees.

PLENARY SPEAKERS





SLC ANNUAL MEETING TAKES ON HUNGER IN THE SOUTH

According to the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Arkansas is tied with Mississippi as having the highest rate of food insecure households in the nation (19.7 percent). In effect, Arkansans — more than almost any other Americans — often are unsure of where they will obtain their next meal.

For the fourth consecutive year, the Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments held the "SLC/Mark Norris Campaign Against Hunger" packaging event, in conjunction with the 68th SLC Annual Meeting.

In previous years, the SLC packaged 20,000 meals – this year the SLC raised the stakes by setting a goal of packaging 50,000 meals within 90 minutes. The SLC accomplished this laudable goal due to an overwhelming level of support from the local community and private sector donors in the Little Rock area. Outreach Incorporated and the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, the SLC's partners in the packaging event, were instrumental in assisting with the event coordination, logistics, and volunteer recruitment.

The SLC's annual collaborator for the event, Outreach Incorporated, an Iowa-based nonprofit with a long-standing commitment to providing food, water, medical care and education to millions of children in the United States and in East Africa, received a \$4,000 donation from the SLC.

In addition to the 50,000 packaged meals, the SLC donated \$3,000 to the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. The Alliance comprises the Arkansas Foodbank in Little Rock; Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas in Jonesboro; Harvest Texarkana Regional Food Bank in Texarkana; Food Bank of North Central Arkansas in Norfork; Northwest Arkansas Food Bank in Bethel Heights; River Valley Regional Food Bank in Fort Smith; and more than 400 local food pantries, soup kitchens, food rescue organizations, global food wholesalers and retailers, state level hunger programs and hunger advocates from around the state.



To view footage of the event, please visit:
http://youtu.be/jEBBm0_60PM

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY



Representative Andy Anders
Louisiana | Chair

USDA STRIKEFORCE INITIATIVE

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) began the StrikeForce pilot program in Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi to partner with community organizations and other stakeholders to encourage development and address persistent poverty in these states. StrikeForce community-based partnerships bring together rural communities with existing resources to facilitate economic growth and increase investments and opportunities in these areas. Since 2010, the StrikeForce pilot program has grown into an initiative working in more than 700 counties across 20 states, including all 15 SLC states. Through the initiative, the USDA has partnered with more than 400 community organizations, businesses, foundations, universities, and other groups to support 80,300 projects and provide more than \$9.7 billion in investments to rural America.

Many StrikeForce projects in SLC states have garnered positive results, including: increasing the number of summer meal sites to provide low-income children with nutritious nourishment; providing landowners with funding and technical assistance to make their forestlands more profitable while conserving natural resources; helping open new farmers markets in food deserts; increasing the number of farms and farmers markets that participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and providing growers with new outlets for the sale of their products, including regional and national retail chains.

SUNDAY, JULY 27

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) STRIKEFORCE INITIATIVE

Latrice Hill, National Manager, StrikeForce for Rural Growth & Opportunity; Director of Outreach, Farm Service Agency, USDA, Washington, D.C.

MONDAY, JULY 28

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION (FDA) AND THE FOOD SAFETY MODERNIZATION ACT

Jeff A. Farrar, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and Partnerships, Office of Foods & Veterinary Medicine, FDA, Maryland

Joe Reardon, Assistant Commissioner, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, North Carolina

Representative Jeff Wardlaw, Arkansas

2014 FARM BILL

Karis T. Gutter, Deputy Under Secretary, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, USDA, Washington, D.C.

Michael Sullivan, State Conservationist, National Resources Conservation Service, USDA, Arkansas

STATE RURAL POLICY INITIATIVE

David Terrell, Chair, Rural State Policy Panel, RUPRI, Missouri

FDA AND THE FOOD SAFETY MODERNIZATION ACT

According to official estimates, one in six Americans is affected by a foodborne illness every year. It is estimated that, each year, approximately 48 million foodborne illnesses cause 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. A 2010 report by Georgetown University's Produce Safety Project estimated that the annual cost associated with foodborne disease in the United States is \$152 billion. Following a series of large food recalls, Congress acted to address the growing food safety concerns that contribute to foodborne illness.

Signed into law in January 2011, the federal Food Safety Modernization Act represents the single largest change in the framework of our nation's food safety system. The law, which aims to transform the United States' food safety system from reactionary to preventative, can be broken down into five main themes: prevention; inspections, compliance, and response; import safety; training and education before regulating; and enhanced partnerships.

To implement the provisions of the law, the FDA has proposed rules on



preventative controls for human and animal food, produce safety, foreign supplier verification, third party accreditation, transportation sanitation, and intentional adulteration. Through the new rules and regulations, the FDA is attempting to achieve a level of consistency in food safety. Increased authority in inspection, compliance, and response will provide mandatory recall authority, improved access to records, and more flexibility in administrative detention authority.

Since 2000, food imports into the United States have grown by as much as 15 percent annually. With one in six FDA-regulated food products consumed in the United States being sourced abroad in



2011, it is important to ensure the foods coming into the country meet the same safety standards as those produced here. Although many farmers already employ independent auditors to ensure the safety of their operations, there has been no way to ensure foreign audits are conducted with the same level of standards as domestic audits. New authority for the FDA to accredit third-party auditors and increase inspections of foreign facilities will help improve consistency. However, the FSMA's inspection mandate is estimated to have an impact of as much as \$2 billion on farmers in the United States, many of whom already have been self-regulating.

Education and adequate training will be necessary before the new regulations can contribute to a more proactive food safety system. State regulatory agencies, land-grant universities, and national associations will be integral partners in the development and delivery of outreach and education programs to the industry.

2014 FARM BILL

The Farm Bill was first enacted in 1933, with provisions for conservation and nutrition being integrated in 1936 and 1941, respectively. In February 2014, after a prolonged period of negotiations and an extension of the expiring 2008 Farm Bill, the long-awaited Agriculture Act of 2014 was enacted. In addition to authorizing agriculture programs for the years 2014 through 2018, the 2014 Farm Bill also authorizes programs for conservation, energy, forestry, and nutrition, among others. While continuing many of the programs from previous farm bills, the 2014 Farm Bill also made significant changes to the framework of other programs, including those in the commodities and conservation titles.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Agriculture and Rural Development Committee elected Representative Andy Anders, Louisiana, to serve as the Committee's chair, and Representative Tom McKee, Kentucky, to serve as the Committee's vice chair for 2014-2015.

One of the most notable changes within commodities is the creation of new programs to replace the traditional, direct payment subsidy program. Unlike the direct payment program, the new Price Loss Coverage and Agricultural Risk Coverage programs will be tied to a producer's actual losses. The first phase of implementation for these new programs is education and outreach. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will reach out to current FSA farmers to educate them about the items in their file, allowing for an opportunity to correct any outdated information or mistakes. The goal of this phase is to educate farmers so that when they are required to enroll in one of the new programs, they will understand which program is best for their operations.

The Farm Bill also provides resources to make loans more readily available for new and young farmers. Recent data shows that the average age of new farmers is 55 years old. Additional resources in the Bill will help maximize services provided to the growing population of older, first-time farmers.

In the past few years, there has been a measurable growth in funding and accomplishments in the Farm Bill's conservation programs. These resources provide tools and incentives to encourage participation in USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service programs. In addition to providing resources to build on this previous success, the 2014 Farm Bill also sought to consolidate and simplify. Among the conservation provisions in the Bill, 23 programs were condensed into 13.

The newly consolidated Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) combines four programs or initiatives from previous Farm Bills. The RCPP aims to further the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of soil,

water, wildlife, and related natural resources on a regional or watershed scale. Implementation of conservation activities through partnership agreements can include projects that focus on water quality and quantity, erosion, wildlife habitat, drought and flood control, or other regional priorities. Funding for RCPP projects will be allocated in the categories of Critical Conservation Areas, national or multi-state projects, and single-state projects. The success of RCPP proposals will be measured on four criteria: solutions, contributions, innovation, and participation.

STATE RURAL POLICY INITIATIVE

The State Rural Policy Initiative is a project of the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) that seeks to provide rural policy leaders with the tools and resources necessary to facilitate economic and rural growth at the state level, as national support for rural development continues to decline.

One of the most critical challenges for rural communities remains the ability to build sufficient capacity. The Initiative's perspective is that rural infrastructure must be strengthened so rural communities can plan for the future while validating the benefits they provide to urban areas. Participation and leadership by younger generations will be essential to the future of rural communities where success will depend on participation, collaboration, and innovation at all levels.

Future plans for the initiative include: identifying and sharing emerging innovations in state and local policy and program design; conducting and coordinating research to assess the impact of these innovations; building capacity to drive information exchange; and helping rural regions identify, implement, and maximize viable, sustainable options for renewal and development.

As part of the Initiative, RUPRI currently provides technical assistance and staff support to Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR). The SOAR initiative, co-chaired by Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear and U.S. Congressman Hal Rogers (Kentucky), seeks to economically diversify the eastern Kentucky region.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORTATION & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY



Senator Bill Sample
Arkansas | Chair

CRYSTAL BRIDGES MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Opened to the public in November 2011, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art was founded in 2005 by the Walton Family Foundation as a non-profit, charitable organization. The facility explores the unfolding story of America by collecting, exhibiting and preserving outstanding works of art that illuminate our nation's heritage and artistic possibilities. Between its opening and May 2014, the Museum welcomed nearly 1.3 million visitors and garnered more than 7,900 households as members. Importantly, approximately 39,000 school children have participated in the Museum's school visit program, which provides admission-free educational experiences for school groups. In addition, more than 220,000 visitors a year have utilized the Museum's 3.5 miles of walking trails. While Crystal Bridges was named after a nearby natural spring and the bridge construction incorporated in the building, the facility was designed by world-renowned architect Moshe Safdie.

Crystal Bridges' permanent collection spans five centuries of American masterworks ranging from the Colonial era to the present day. Included within the collection are iconic images such as Asher B. Durand's *Kindred Spirits*, Norman Rockwell's *Rosie the Riveter*, and Andy Warhol's *Coca-Cola* — each reflecting a distinct moment in American artistic evolution—as well as major works by modern and contemporary American artists.

SUNDAY, JULY 27

CRYSTAL BRIDGES: REVITALIZING ARKANSAS'S CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

Rod Bigelow, Executive Director, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Arkansas

LEVERAGING MANUFACTURING TO EXPAND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN ARKANSAS

Grant Tennille, Executive Director, Economic Development Commission, Arkansas

FUNDING TRANSPORTATION IN THE STATES: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Scott Bennett, Director, State Highway and Transportation Department, Arkansas

Sherri H. LeBas, Secretary, Department of Transportation and Development, Louisiana

MONDAY, JULY 28

SOUTHERN STATE EFFORTS TOWARD A 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE

Senator Mark Norris, Majority Leader, Tennessee

William C. Wampler, Jr., Executive Director, New College Institute, Virginia

Glen Fenter, Ph.D., President, Mid-South Community College, Arkansas

ADVANCING LOGISTICS AND SUPPLY CHAIN EFFORTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Russell Gwatney, President, Gwatney Enterprises, Inc., Tennessee

LEVERAGING MANUFACTURING TO EXPAND ECONOMIC GROWTH

A June 2014 report released by the National Association of Manufacturers recognized Arkansas for having the second-highest manufacturing employment as a percent of total employment in the South. In recent years, Arkansas has focused on fostering manufacturing operations in areas such as advanced food manufacturing and packaging; aerospace and aviation; firearms and ammunition; paper and timber products; and transportation equipment manufacturing. The aerospace and aviation sector remains the state's leading advanced manufacturing export, in part, because the state offers a very competitive environment for these companies to operate along with a highly skilled workforce.

Arkansas's focus on workforce development has served as a critical component in the advanced manufacturing arena. For example, the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges' Aerospace Training Consortium offers aviation and aerospace programs in a number of related disciplines. In addition, Henderson State University in Arkadelphia offers a four-year Bachelor

of Science degree in aviation. As a result of the state's focus on promoting this sector, Arkansas is home to nearly 180 aerospace/aviation companies, including well-known industry names such as Aerojet Rocketdyne, Aviation Repair Technologies, Dassault Falcon Jet Corporation, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Pratt & Whitney and Raytheon Missile Systems.

FUNDING TRANSPORTATION IN THE STATES

The Louisiana Department of Transportation's scope of responsibilities extends to the following spheres within transportation: roadways, aviation, bridges, freight, waterways, ports, public transit and public works. The uncertainty related to the reauthorization of federal transportation legislation has forced the department to prepare for several contingencies, but it does not expect delays for any bid lettings. Reflecting a trend evident in all states, the purchasing power of Louisiana's gas tax revenues has been eroding during the last few decades. As a result, the state has devised two alternate revenue mechanisms to support transportation: (1) dedicated vehicle registration fees and (2) state sales tax on new and used vehicles that is chan-

neled to the state Transportation Trust Fund. The latter tax generates about \$400 million annually.

Like most states, Arkansas faces challenges related to adequately funding its transportation system. However, unlike many other states, Arkansas passed a sales tax increase in 2012 to raise additional revenue for transportation projects. Arkansas is the only state in the country where voters recently passed two statewide highway programs: the Interstate Rehabilitation Program (IRP) in 2011 and the Connecting Arkansas Program (CAP) in 2012. While the IRP passed with 81 percent in favor, the CAP passed with 58 percent in favor. Although the IRP did not include a tax increase, the CAP did: a one-half cent sales tax increase. The IRP authorized the state to reissue Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle bonds for Interstate improvements.

SOUTHERN STATE EFFORTS TOWARD A 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE

In response to the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs in the 1990s, local civic and political leaders identified the need for improved access to higher education and began advocating for the establishment of a college in southern Virginia. In 2006, the New College Institute in Martinsville, Virginia, was created by the General Assembly to train a workforce equipped to deal with the complexities of 21st century manufacturing jobs. In 2014, New College opened a new \$18.7 million, 52,000-square foot building with classrooms for advanced manufacturing training; conferences and lectures; and to house \$3 million in world-class advanced manufacturing equipment. In addition to graduating students with credentials and degrees that meet employer requirements, New College

and the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation share office space to facilitate recruiting visits with prospective employers. Rolls-Royce, the world's second-largest airplane engine maker, has a presence at New College's Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing.

Tennessee, like many other states in the country, faces the challenge of creating an adequately trained workforce. Data demonstrates that approximately half of all Americans reach their mid-20s without the skills or credentials essential for success in today's economy. In fact, the most common pathway to a career—a high school diploma and a four-year college degree—is not effective for all. Based on projections, 55 percent of Tennessee jobs will require at least a technical certification by 2025, a catalyst of the state's *Drive to 55* initiative. Meanwhile, *Tennessee Promise* provides the opportunity for every high school graduate in Tennessee to attend a community college or Tennessee College of Applied Technology free of tuition and fees.

Like Virginia and Tennessee, Arkansas faces the challenge of creating an adequately trained workforce to staff the positions involved in advanced manufacturing jobs. A well-trained workforce is critical for attracting a roster of companies that will generate high-tech, high-wage jobs. The Arkansas Delta Training Consortium (ADTEC), a consortium of five universities in the state, was tasked with expanding the workforce development infrastructure in the state, creating an alternate energy training center, establishing a transportation center of excellence, growing the state's advanced manufacturing support structure, and augmenting the education infrastructure in the state. To accomplish this, ADTEC

works closely with business and industry alongside the K-12 system, secondary schools and technical centers.

ADVANCING LOGISTICS AND SUPPLY CHAIN EFFORTS

State policymakers face an array of challenges in advancing their economic systems to contend with competition, not only across state lines, but across the United States and across the globe. The globalization of trade alongside the rapid growth in world trade has forced state policymakers to ensure that the logistics and supply chain programs in their jurisdictions operate at peak capacity. World gross domestic product has surged from \$39 trillion in 1990, to \$54 trillion in 2000, to \$80 trillion in 2013. Some of the factors advancing global logistics and supply chain systems include expansion projects at the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal and the construction of the Three Gorges Dam project in China.

One strategy state policymakers might consider to advance economic growth by promoting global supply chains and logistics is establishing a Statewide Logistics and Supply Chain Taskforce. The Taskforce would comprise representatives from the public and private sectors, including each of the multimodal players, transportation and urban planners, and major manufacturers in the state. The Taskforce would study current metrics within each transportation mode looking at capacity and timeframes; review combinations of different transportation modes at different manufacturing sites with the purpose of integrating combinations of modes and creating a more seamless transportation network; and constantly evaluate the state's transportation system in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, environmental impact, public safety, and congruency.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Economic Development, Transportation & Cultural Affairs Committee elected Senator Jeff Mullis, Georgia, to serve as the Committee's chair, and Representative Brent Yonts, Kentucky, to serve as the Committee's vice chair for 2014-2015.



EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY



Senator John Unger II
West Virginia | Chair

CREATING CREATIVE DESIGNS

Chief engineers of automobile development, much like policymakers, must predict the needs of their customers at least three to five years into the future. At Toyota, designs must find the perfect balance between aesthetic appeal, safety measures, fuel economy, and numerous unbendable factors that all need to create the perfect customer experience. Feedback from customers is incorporated into vehicle design, as they ultimately will determine the success or failure of the final product.

To foster creative design and student achievement, the Society of Automotive Engineers sponsors in-the-classroom learning activities that inspire the hidden engineers in children. The main program, *A World in Motion*, sends auto engineers into the classroom over several weeks to lead students in hands-on learning that not only inspires would-be engineers, but also teaches skills important to any vocation, such as team work, compromise, respect, and the courage to fail and try again until finally finding success.

Foremost, state policymakers must see children as their most precious commodity and challenge them in their day-to-day activities. Institutions of learning need to teach that there are no bad ideas, and that failing is an acceptable learning experience. Schools need to foster team work and good communication to create diverse working groups where ideas, no matter how different the perspective, can generate new understandings and insights.

SUNDAY, JULY 27

CREATING CREATIVE DESIGNS IN EDUCATION

Gregory D. Bernas, Chief Engineer, Product Development Office, Toyota Technical Center, Michigan

Mark Schneider, President, College Measures; Vice President, American Institutes for Research, Washington, D.C.

MONDAY, JULY 28

APPLICATION OF NEUROSCIENCE ON EDUCATION POLICY

Mariale Hardiman, Ed.D., Director, Neuro-Education Initiative, The Johns Hopkins University, Maryland

Ronald E. Kalil, Ph.D., Director, Neuroscience and Public Policy Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison

EARLY EDUCATION POLICY

W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D., Board of Governors Professor, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Bruce Atchison, Executive Director of Policy and Operations, Education Commission of the States, Colorado

A study conducted by College Measures examining higher education systems in Arkansas, Colorado, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia found that, in the three states (Colorado, Texas and Virginia) that divide their associate degrees into technical and transfer categories, technical graduates out-earn bachelor's graduates. Two of the study states do not categorize associate degrees but, in Tennessee, associate graduates earn more than bachelor's graduates.

Generally, first generation students are earning sub-baccalaureate degrees in greater numbers than advanced degrees. Paraprofessional graduate growth is highest, driven by the medical industry. Long-term certificate holders still have higher incomes than bachelor's degree holders, but their rate of growth is very low, and high school diplomas are the most common credentials earned by non-traditional students.

When measuring median first and fifth year earnings for associate degree graduates, the highest paid are in health and manufacturing professions. When breaking down wage data by university, there are clear differences between campuses.

There are several strategies that will make states more competitive by attracting students to high-skill, high-wage jobs. State policymakers should focus their efforts on linking wage data to student unit records and making this data public to better inform students and parents. States also need to focus on vocational routes that teach graduates how to fix things or fix people, as these graduates earn more. Programs for sub-baccalaureate credentials generally have a higher return. States should begin collecting more data on what students learn as well as what they earn, and assess other non-economic returns to higher education, such as voter participation and community involvement.

APPLICATION OF NEUROSCIENCE ON EDUCATION POLICY

One method developed for linking neuroscience with state education policy involves the use of a brain-targeted teaching model with education practices. Research supporting the model suggests that teacher training with this method leads to changes in teacher practices, as well as significant differences in teacher perceptions when using relevant findings from cognitive science and neuroscience.

The most important factor in determining how well we remember information is the degree to which we rehearse and repeat that information. Further, engagement in creative activities can lead to measurable changes in brain volume, structure, and function, as well as increased performance on cognitive tests.

In the brains of all mammals, including humans, a patch of cells lining the wall in one of the interconnected fluid-filled chambers of the brain, the lateral ventricle, produces new neurons daily that exclusively populate the olfactory system. While the cells that are producing new neurons for the olfactory system are unaffected by our behavior or the social contexts in which we live, the cells generating new neurons for the hippocampus are exquisitely sensitive to how we conduct our lives or to the social contexts that influence our trajectories. This is especially true for children; children who grow up in stressful environments, accompanied by poor parenting, suffer diminished hippocampal neurogenesis and, consequently, perform poorly in school.

Cognitive function is vitally dependent upon a well-structured and functioning hippocampus, but events occur in adult life that compromise cognitive function. Poverty is one of the most salient of these events. Poor adults make bad decisions and lead lives that usually are not well planned, driving themselves deeper into poverty.

Carefully controlled studies compared poor individuals to those who are fi-

nancially secure in tests of cognitive capability and demonstrated that poverty significantly reduces the cognitive ability or "cognitive bandwidth" of financially insecure subjects. The authors estimate that poverty has trimmed 13-15 points off of the IQ of a typical impoverished individual. Poverty also leads to poor parenting, which adversely affects a child's ability to learn and do well in school, creating a cycle of poor performance.

There is a cost-effective, simple strategy that parents can employ to give their children a chance to overcome an adverse environment and do well in school. The strategy involves simply reading aloud to one's child every day for the first three years.

Reach Out and Read is an organization supported nationally by pediatricians to educate mothers about the importance of reading to their children. Every member state of the Southern Legislative Conference has a *Reach Out and Read* program, but some do not yet have a *Reach Out and Read* coalition. The creation of these coalitions should be a goal for all of the states in the South because they provide the latest information and resources to help parents function effectively in helping children begin their lives with a solid foundation.

EARLY EDUCATION POLICY

The societal impacts of early childhood education are well documented as stepping stones toward educational success, well-being, and economic

productivity. Studies show that early education and intervention lead to increases in achievement, mental and physical health, employment and earnings and educational attainment, as well as decreased behavior problems and school failure. In relation, the effects of successful students on society are lower costs for schools, social services, crime and health, leading to a higher rate of economic growth.

However, high-quality preschool still is not available in most states. Initial effects of early childhood education are quite small, and program designs are too weak to produce large gains. The reason for this small impact is that implementation of these programs is not consistent, and there is no system to ensure continuous improvement and results. Nevertheless, in most studies, the benefits of early childhood education do not entirely disappear.

To produce larger gains in early education, states should focus on intentional teaching with individualization and small groups, data-driven continuous improvement, and the design of programs that have short-term gains twice as large as the desired long-term gains. On the national level, state pre-K programs have seen enrollment more than double in the last 10 years. Quality standards have improved and spending on programs has increased (though it has not kept up with enrollment). However, the Great Recession's impact on state pre-K funding is clear, which has affected quality standards, enrollment, and equality across states. Given the high economic returns of quality early education, state pre-K programs with high standards that focus on continuous improvement with adequate funding are one of the best investments states can make toward early preparation of a highly educated, highly skilled 21st century workforce.



ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Education Committee elected Senator John Unger II, West Virginia, to serve as the Committee's chair, and Senator Dolores Gresham, Tennessee, to serve as the Committee's vice chair for 2014-2015.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY



Representative Denny Altes
Arkansas | Chair

FUELING THE FUTURE: SHALE EXPLORATION AND THE SLC STATES

Natural gas has been an important product for the state of Arkansas for more than 120 years, with production beginning in 1889. Today, Arkansas ranks 8th in the nation for natural gas production and 25 of 75 Arkansas counties produce oil or natural gas. Approximately 90 percent of the state's natural gas is produced by the Fayetteville Shale Basin, and 500 new wells are constructed annually in this area.

As the natural gas industry expands, the Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission (AOGC) continues to monitor three issues of concern: water use and contamination; chemical disclosure; and seismic activity. Understanding the importance of the state's water supply, Southwestern Energy has sourced water for hydraulic fracturing operations in a manner that would not compete with water for the public. To date, the company has constructed 162 ponds, contracted for the use of 389 private water sources, managed permits for creek and stream withdrawals, and reused 100 percent of flow-back water. The use of constructed ponds has significantly reduced transport by truck, limiting the strain placed on state infrastructure. Arkansas is one of the first states in the nation to require companies to disclose the chemicals used in the fracking process. These disclosures are posted online through the AOGC's website. Continuing their commitment to safety, the Commission closely monitors seismic activity associated with natural gas drilling. When seismic ac-

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FUELING THE FUTURE: SHALE EXPLORATION AND THE SLC STATES

*Lawrence Bengal, Director, Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission
George Sheffer, Vice President of Operations, Fayetteville Shale, Arkansas*

BRIGHT IDEAS: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ENERGY SECTOR

*Carl Handley, Plant Manager, Flint Creek Power Plant, American Electric Power, Arkansas
Duane Highley, Chief Executive Officer, Arkansas Electric Cooperatives*

MONDAY, JULY 28

GRID SECURITY: PROTECTING AMERICA'S POWER

*Curt Hebert, Visiting Scholar, Bipartisan Policy Center, Washington, D.C.
Michael Hightower, Distinguished Member of the Technical Staff, Military and Energy Systems, Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico*

tivity is linked to drilling, a moratorium is placed on the offending wells. To date, four wells have been closed due to increased seismic activity.

Southwestern Energy has been an important partner in the development of natural gas in the Fayetteville Shale region. Since 2004, more than 3,500 wells have been completed by Southwestern Energy in the company's 906,000 net acres of land in the Fayetteville Shale Basin. The company acts as a steward of water resources and has developed partnerships to improve the community's economy. With a goal of hiring locally, Southwestern Energy developed a two-year Petroleum Technology Program with the University of Arkansas Community College in Morrilton and formed a scholarship fund with other oil and natural gas producers.

From 2008 to 2011, the Fayetteville Shale activities in the state generated more than \$18.5 billion in economic activity. Industry analysts estimate that more than 33,000 jobs have been supported by the state's oil and natural gas production.

BRIGHT IDEAS: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ENERGY SECTOR

The U.S. Energy Secretary has signaled that U.S. energy infrastructure development is a top domestic policy prior-



ity, particularly with the surge in U.S. oil and natural gas production. The national energy infrastructure is a complex system connecting thousands of power plants through a web of transmission and distribution lines. Potential failures and fluctuations of delivery have significant security and economic repercussions for the Southern region and its citizens.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Energy & Environment Committee elected Representative William "Bill" Sandifer III, South Carolina, to serve as the Committee's chair, and Representative Lynn Smith, Georgia, to serve as the Committee's vice chair for 2014-2015.



To ensure the reliability of the grid, experts have stressed the importance of anchoring power supplies with a stable base load.* Base load plants operate continuously to meet daily electricity needs. Traditionally, base loads are generated by coal-fueled plants such as the Flint Creek Power Plant located in Gentry, Arkansas.

In order to meet the state's base load requirements, while also complying with new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations on air emissions, the Flint Creek Power Plant has begun construction on a retrofit with new pollution control equipment. This upgrade will allow the plant to maintain critical reliability, meet environmental regulations at the lowest reasonable cost to customers, and preserve the 69 jobs sustained by the plant's operation. At its peak,

* Base load is the basic, constant demand for power that exists within the electrical grid.

this infrastructure upgrade will create more than 300 construction jobs and up to 30 permanent jobs.

Energy generated by natural gas has a significantly lower CO₂ footprint than energy produced by coal-fired plants. Regulations proposed by the EPA on June 2, 2014, have the potential to significantly impact the nation's energy infrastructure by incentivizing a shift from coal base loads to natural gas base loads. However, in order to accommodate such a shift, the United States will need to make substantial investments in expanding inter- and intrastate pipelines to transport natural gas. Without these investments in critical energy infrastructure, states could struggle to meet energy demand.

GRID SECURITY: PROTECTING AMERICA'S POWER

Protecting the nation's electrical grid is a critical national security issue. A prolonged and sustained failure of

America's energy grid would have profound repercussions for our national economy. While federal and state governments, as well as industry, are aware of these issues, preventing and mitigating such threats require comprehensive and coordinated strategies across many sectors – both public and private – requiring extensive resources.

Experts warn that the most feared threats to the grid are not necessarily the most menacing. For example, the effects of electromagnetic pulses on the U.S. power grid have been one of the most studied threats. Evidence collected by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security suggests that cyber-attacks on key energy infrastructure—and on the electricity system in particular—are increasing, both in frequency and sophistication. Despite this, cyber-terrorism is believed to be less of a threat than grid vandalism conducted by disgruntled former employees or aberrant youths.

One of the ways that the U.S. Department of Energy is addressing grid security is through the development of advanced microgrids and microgrid exchange groups. A microgrid is a group of interconnected nodes and distributed energy resources within clearly defined electrical boundaries that acts as a single controllable entity. If desired, a microgrid can connect and disconnect from the grid to enable it to operate in both grid-connected or island-mode. These grids enhance the integration of distributed and renewable energy sources and provide increased reliability. For example, the use of advanced microgrids allowed Wall Street to maintain its power supply throughout Tropical Storm Sandy. It is important to protect transmission lines and to have plans for diverting power when prolonged mass outages occur.

FISCAL AFFAIRS & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY



Representative Randy McDaniel
Oklahoma | Chair

FEDERALISM ISSUES IN STATE TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Throughout 2014, The Council of State Governments (CSG) will focus on federalism issues, including transportation, an arena where the federal government plays a dominant role. Notwithstanding this influential federal role in our nation's transportation structure, there is a noticeable transformation currently in progress: an increase in the decision-making authority of state governments with regard to federal transportation funds. This trend is evident in the current iteration of the federal transportation reauthorization, *The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century* (or MAP-21) legislation signed into law in July 2012. In addition, given that recent federal transportation reauthorizations have been very late, stricken by partisan gridlock and funded at inadequate and stagnant levels, a number of state governments are initiating and implementing their own efforts to fund essential transportation and infrastructure projects.

A major reason for the inability of the U.S. Congress to reach agreement on long-term federal transportation authorization legislation is the backlash against earmarks, particularly for transportation and infrastructure spending. Until about a decade ago, there was widespread support in Congress for earmarks, particularly if they were part of a broader, national effort to advance transportation and infrastructure. Members of Congress worked across the aisle to support critical infrastructure and trans-

SUNDAY, JULY 27 LEGISLATIVE FISCAL PLENARY SESSION

THE EVOLVING ROLE OF FEDERALISM ISSUES IN STATE TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Moderator: Senator Mark Norris, Majority Leader, Tennessee
Rodney E. Slater, Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Washington, D.C.
C. Kenneth Orski, Transportation Consultant, Maryland

MONDAY, JULY 28

ROLE OF INCENTIVES IN STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Patrick McHugh, Ph.D., Fiscal Research Division,
General Assembly, North Carolina

PUBLIC PENSION FUNDING TRENDS

Chris Mier, Managing Director, Analytical Services Division, Loop Capital, Illinois



portation projects in states across the country. This was a development that facilitated the enactment of *The Transportation Equity Act For The 21st Century* (or TEA-21) and legislation to promote the safety and security of the nation's aviation system, both during the Clinton Administration. However, about 10 years ago, there was growing awareness across the country that most members of Congress were attaching earmarks to an excessive number of projects that did not relate to the most basic national transportation and infrastructure priorities; a trend that resulted in a recoil against almost all types of earmarks. Consequently, this extinguished, to a large

extent, the possibility for Congress to reach agreement on long-term transportation authorization legislation to adequately finance the nation's infrastructure needs.

By late July 2014, the cash balance of the federal Highway Trust Fund, which draws revenue from the federal gas tax, drew dangerously close to insolvency resulting in the U.S. Transportation Department slowing or delaying state reimbursements. A number of factors account for this alarming scenario, such as inflation, more fuel-efficient vehicles and changing driving habits. The federal gas tax also has not been raised in more than two de-



ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Fiscal Affairs & Government Operations Committee elected Senator Roman Prezioso, West Virginia, to serve as the Committee's chair, and Senator Jonathan Dismang, Arkansas, to serve as the Committee's vice chair for 2014-2015.

cades. In response, Congress is expected to pass a short-term extension to the current federal transportation reauthorization legislation set to expire at the end of September 2014. Notwithstanding this federal inertia, states have sprung into action. A number of states have increased local fuel taxes, introduced fuel taxes at the wholesale level, floated toll revenue bonds, raised highway tolls, and enacted dedicated sales taxes for transportation. In fact, more than 30 states have launched transportation-related fiscal initiatives in the past two years. Nevertheless, transportation experts and state transportation officials note that a long-term federal authorization that appropriately funds infrastructure and transportation remains vital and necessary for the United States to maintain its competitive edge in the global economy.

ROLE OF INCENTIVES IN STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Financial incentives provided to corporations by state and local governments often are the most talked about and publicized elements in public economic development projects. However, a growing body of research documents that, while financial incentives are an item that companies consider,

they are not the primary factor resulting in a corporation selecting a particular location for their operations. In fact, companies are more heavily focused on issues such as a well-trained workforce; access to inputs and customers; efficient transportation and logistics; research and development capacity; quality of life; and the role the company might play in the community at large. Economic development experts reiterate that it is important for public officials to advance these criteria at their locations and not rely merely on financial incentives to attract and retain companies. Experts stress that because incentives are not designed to be a permanent, open-ended feature of a company's relationship with a state or local government, it is critical to maintain steady improvement in these other attributes to influence company location decisions. In probing the advantages of discretionary incentives versus statutory tax incentives, experts agree that discretionary incentives serve the public interest in a more significant manner.

PUBLIC PENSION FUNDING TRENDS

While the financial positions of public pensions have stabilized and improved, they do remain precarious in a handful of states. The funded ratio and the annual required contribution (ARC) are the two basic metrics which describe state and local performance in meeting pension obligations. While the fiscal year 2013 median funded ratio for states is 69 percent, nine states had ratios below 60 percent, three below 50 percent

and one below 40 percent. For SLC member states, the aggregate funded ratio stood at 76.1 percent, in comparison to 71.7 percent for the remaining 35 states. In terms of their ARC, states paid 80.7 percent in 2013, up from 78.1 percent for fiscal year 2012. In fact, the overall dollar value of ARC payments rose 10 percent in fiscal year 2013.

As expected, states with the lowest aggregate funded ratios did not contribute their full ARC in fiscal year 2013. Considering that these states failed to provide sufficient funding during the economic expansion, there are concerns about what they will do during a time of fiscal strain in the future. Given that the five-year rally in the stock market will inevitably come to an end, the funding position of states that have failed to make their ARC will deteriorate even further. These states may have to increase their ARC in order to make up for asset appreciation that fails to meet the assumed investment assumptions (usually between 7 percent and 8 percent) enjoyed during the current boom in the stock market.

In addition, states that have underfunded their ARCs have failed to take advantage of strong asset appreciation over the past five years. Devising solutions to municipal bankruptcies, which remain very rare, may have an impact on how pension liabilities and state protection of pension benefits are viewed in municipal bankruptcy proceedings, although this could vary from state to state.

HUMAN SERVICES & PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY



Senator Emmett Hanger, Jr.
Virginia | Chair

MEDICAID EXPANSION UPDATE

Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia have chosen to implement Medicaid expansion under the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA). In January 2014, three SLC member states, Arkansas, Kentucky, and West Virginia, began operating expanded Medicaid programs to provide coverage for adults with incomes up to 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Each SLC state is utilizing a slightly different Medicaid expansion model, but all have exceeded their expectations.

Under a federal waiver, Arkansas has pioneered the private option model for Medicaid expansion. Arkansas's Private Option plan uses Medicaid expansion funds to enroll newly eligible adults in private insurance plans through the health insurance marketplace. Beyond providing healthcare to previously uninsured Arkansans, the Private Option has moved Arkansas closer to achieving four legislative goals for the state's overall insurance market. The first goal is to shrink Medicaid and grow private insurance. Enrolling Medicaid-eligible Arkansans in private insurance plans has quadrupled the size of the state's insurance market. Growth of the market helps the state move toward its second goal of attracting insurance carriers to the state and promoting competition. With regard to individuals, the Private Option contributes to the third goal of promoting personal responsibility. Using Health Savings Accounts, Medicaid enrollees are able to track their healthcare spending in the

SUNDAY, JULY 27

MEDICAID EXPANSION UPDATE

Andy Allison, Former Director of Medicaid, Arkansas

Eric Friedlander, Deputy Secretary, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Kentucky
Jeremiah Samples, Deputy Secretary, Department of Health and Human Resources, West Virginia

THE RISING COST OF PRISON HEALTHCARE

Matt McKillop, Senior Associate, State Health Care Spending Project, The PEW Charitable Trust, Washington, D.C.

Lauren Sheer, Legislative Director, University of Texas, Medical Branch, Texas

MONDAY, JULY 28

MENTAL HEALTH REFORMS

Sita Diehl, Director of State Policy and Advocacy, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Virginia

same way as the non-Medicaid population. The final goal is to reduce churn in the Medicaid population. Enrolling the Medicaid population in private insurance plans largely eliminates gaps in coverage or requirements to change providers when a member no longer is Medicaid-eligible. This continuity of care can lead to reduced costs and better management of chronic diseases. Exceeding expectations, between 75 percent and 80 percent of Arkansans expected to become Medicaid-eligible under the expansion already have enrolled in a Private Option plan.

In November 2011, Kentucky transitioned about 550,000 of its more than 800,000 Medicaid-eligible individuals to one of three Managed Care Organizations (MCO). On the heels of that transition, the state began to consider the options of creating a state-run insurance marketplace and expanding Medicaid. Ultimately, Kentucky decided to undertake both. Before deciding to expand Medicaid, Kentucky collaborated with the University of Louisville to study the potential pros and cons of expansion in the state. From that study, it was anticipated that more than 300,000 residents would become Medicaid-eligible under expansion and that 55 percent of those would enroll in the first year, leveling out to 70 percent in subsequent years. Actu-

al post-expansion enrollment has outpaced anticipated enrollment in every county. In the first month of expansion, enrollment was more than 8 percent higher than anticipated, with 159,782 expansion enrollees. By June 2014, enrollment grew to 288,292, almost double the anticipated enrollment. The challenges for Kentucky going forward will be managing costs associated with growth and managing the churn of Medicaid enrollees. While total enrollment numbers continue to grow, the individuals themselves are constantly changing. The state estimates that it will take about five years before seeing improvement in their national health rankings; however, the pre-expansion transition to MCOs and Medicaid expansion are expected to play a significant role in that improvement.

In 2012, West Virginia commissioned an actuarial analysis on the impact of the ACA on the state, including the option to expand Medicaid. The analysis estimated that, with the ACA, the number of uninsured West Virginians would drop from 246,000 to 76,000 by 2016. Further estimates showed that approximately 91,500 West Virginians would be covered with Medicaid expansion by 2016. In May 2013, West Virginia announced it would expand its Medicaid program, while phasing all Medicaid recipients into a managed

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Human Services & Public Safety Committee elected Representative Joni Jenkins, Kentucky, to serve as the Committee's chair, and Senator Doug Overbey, Tennessee, to serve as the Committee's vice chair for 2014-2015.



care model and charging all applicable recipients a copay. The decision to expand was contingent upon the federal government maintaining its promised match in funds. As of July 2014, 134,278 West Virginians have enrolled in Medicaid under expansion. Among states that expanded Medicaid, West Virginia has seen the largest drop in the rate of uninsured adults and has had the most new Medicaid enrollees, per capita.

THE RISING COST OF PRISON HEALTHCARE

The rising costs of both healthcare and corrections are perennial concerns for state budget makers. A recent report from The PEW Charitable Trust found that, in recent years, an intersection between the two no longer means these concerns are mutually exclusive. The October 2013 report found that between 2007 and 2011, 41 states experienced an increase in total prison healthcare spending, with a median increase of 13 percent. During that same time, per inmate spending grew in 39 states, with a median growth of 10 percent. In 2011, California spent the most per inmate at \$14,495. At \$2,558, Oklahoma spent the least. This represents a 42 percent increase and 17 percent decrease in per inmate spending from 2007, respectively. Despite the dramatic variation among states' per inmate spending, the report found

that higher spending did not necessarily indicate waste, and lower spending did not necessarily indicate efficiency. Some factors contributing to the rise in healthcare spending include a national trend that resulted in more incarcerations and longer sentences, higher incidences of chronic and infectious diseases, and a growing population of inmates age 55 or older.

Most states' prison healthcare spending peaked before 2011. A reduction in prison populations, rather than increased efficiencies, is the primary factor contributing to the overall spending reductions.

Despite the national growth trend, Texas has found success in containing prison healthcare costs. Contributing to this success is the Texas Correctional Managed Health Care partnership legislatively created in 1994, between the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC). Through this partnership, the TDCJ contracts with UTMB and TTUHSC to provide complete medical services for offender healthcare, including all medical, dental, and mental health services. This partnership has eliminated the traditional fee-for-service arrangements with multiple hospital providers. The UTMB's hospital in Galveston is a full correctional hospital, which eliminates the need for additional guards and oversight that would be necessary to treat inmates at traditional hospitals. Telemedicine allows the universities to provide prisoner services across the state while also reducing transportation costs. Providing for the full pharmaceutical needs of TDCJ, the partnership has been able to capture millions of dollars in annual savings through the 340B Drug Pricing Program; since FY 2009, the program estimates an average annual savings of \$38.9 million.

MENTAL HEALTH UPDATE

During the recent economic downturn, mental health services became one of the many state service areas widely affected by budget reductions, ranging from cuts to staffing, to a reduction or elimination of services pro-

vided. In recent years, a number of different factors have prompted states to re-examine the array of mental health services being provided. As states begin to reconstitute their mental health programs, they also are looking for opportunities to reform the way these services are delivered.

Some of the notable actions SLC member states have taken in recent years include: the addition or expansion of early identification and intervention programs; expansion of integrated care services; increased use of evidence-based practices; expanded use of telemedicine; provision of more opportunities for family involvement; expansion of crisis services; and enhanced training for first responders.

With half of all mental illnesses beginning by age 14, and three-quarters beginning by age 24, states have taken action to add or expand early identification and intervention programs. In 2014, South Carolina passed legislation to extend the age of children's services from 18 to 21. Virginia passed legislation that will require websites of four-year public colleges to feature a page solely dedicated to information about the mental health resources available to its students.

Provisions of the Affordable Care Act have allowed some states to better serve the mental health needs of Medicaid recipients. Under these provisions, Missouri and Tennessee have become leaders in the use of medical and behavioral health homes. Alabama, Missouri, North Carolina, and West Virginia have participated in the Medicaid Emergency Psychiatric Demonstration, which examines the benefits of providing Medicaid reimbursements to private psychiatric hospitals for emergencies.

In 2014, Virginia passed legislation to improve its emergency mental health services by establishing an online registry of public and private psychiatric beds in hospitals and crisis stabilization units. The online registry will help streamline the placement of individuals during the time allowed for emergency commitment and temporary detention, which was extended by the legislation.

LEGISLATIVE SERVICE AGENCY WORKSHOP SUMMARY



Marty Garrity

Director, Bureau of Legislative Research
Arkansas | Chair

THE SUPREME COURT AND THE STATES: BRIEFING FROM THE STATE AND LOCAL LEGAL CENTER

Handing down a number of recent groundbreaking and controversial decisions, such as those pertaining, but not limited, to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, First Amendment and Affirmative Action, the Supreme Court of the United States was the source of much political and legal discussion during its 2013-2014 term. In *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action*, the Court held 6-2 that voters may, by ballot, prohibit affirmative action in public university admissions decisions. In 2006, Michigan voters adopted a constitutional amendment to prohibit preferential treatment in admissions to public universities on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin. The majority of the Court concluded this amendment does not violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Justice Kennedy, in a plurality opinion joined by Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Alito, concluded that this case is about whom, and not how, the debate over racial preferences should be resolved. Kennedy writes, "There is no authority in the Constitution of the United States or in this Court's precedents for the Judiciary to set aside Michigan laws that commit this policy determination to the voters." Justices Sotomayor and Ginsburg dissented; Justice Kagan did not participate in the case. While this case was limited to the use of race in public university admissions decisions, Mich-

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THE SUPREME COURT AND THE STATES: BRIEFING FROM THE STATE AND LOCAL LEGAL CENTER

Lisa Soronen, Executive Director, State and Local Legal Center, Washington, D.C.

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

Ann Cornwell, Director, Secretary of the Senate, Arkansas

Caroline Dennis, Director of Legislative Operations, Senate, Oklahoma

EXPERIENCES OF NEW RESEARCH DIVISION DIRECTORS

Moderator: *Aaron Allred*, Legislative Auditor, Legislative Manager, West Virginia

Marty Garrity, Director, Bureau of Legislative Research, Arkansas

Marcia Seiler, Acting Director, Legislative Research Commission, Kentucky

CAPITOL SPACE ALLOCATION

Debra Myers, Facilities Director, Georgia Building Authority; Past President,

National Association of State Facilities Administrators

igan's constitutional amendment also prohibits the use of racial preference in state and local government employment and contracting.

In *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* the Court held 5-4 that the Affordable Care Act's birth control mandate violates the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), as applied to closely held corporations. RFRA provides that the federal government "shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion." As relevant to state and local governments, the Court concluded closely held corporations are "persons" under RFRA. The Dictionary Act defines person to include corporations, and the Court saw "nothing in RFRA that suggests a congressional intent to depart from the Dictionary Act definition." The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) bars state and local governments from enforcing land use regulations that substantially burden "the religious exercise of a person." If for-profit corporations are "persons" under RFRA, they also are likely "persons" under RLUIPA.

The Court issued decisions on a number of other cases, including those involving the Chemical Weapons Convention Implementation Act; First Amend-

ment protections; Eighth Amendment protections against the execution of persons with intellectual disabilities; aggregate limits on individual contributions to candidates for federal office; political parties and political action committees; and the Clean Air Act's Good Neighbor Provision.

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

During the past 20 years, term limits for state legislators have been one of the most widely debated issues across the country. Lawmakers in five of 15 SLC member states are subject to term limits, which pose myriad opportunities and challenges for legislative staff responsible for developing and implementing programs to effectively orient new lawmakers. Many states without term limits have seen higher turnover in legislative membership than in the past.

Most state legislatures provide an orientation that ranges from one to two-and-a-half days, understanding the importance of balancing key information with legislators' busy schedules. States often break the orientation up over two days to allow legislators time to reflect on what they've learned. However, traditional training methods using presentations and panels still are popular. To enhance this



learning opportunity, the provision of handbooks has been identified as a best practice. This allows new legislators to reference material at a later date and facilitates a more comprehensive understanding. Most states provide training for ethics and conflict of interest laws and policies.

Understanding the legislative process has been the cornerstone of new member orientations, and it continues to be a critical topic. Overviews of state taxes and tax policy, education systems, health and welfare programs, environmental policy and judiciary general-

ly are included. Most orientations also cover the bill enactment process, legislative rules (parliamentary procedure); staffing roles and practices; and committee systems and administrative details, such as expense reimbursement. Additionally, states often include the budget process, media relations, constituent services, state government organization and the role of party caucuses.

EXPERIENCES OF NEW RESEARCH DIVISION DIRECTORS

Legislative research division directors oversee services that include bill drafting; legal, fiscal and general research; staff assistance for legislative committees and task forces; and computer and technology support. Research divisions assist legislators and their staff by providing factual, nonpartisan in-

formation on a variety of topics and on the increasingly technical and scientific basis of public policy. Staff answer questions and gather data to help legislators as they prepare legislation or respond to inquiries. Research division directors also are challenged to integrate emerging technology to better disseminate information, maintain institutional knowledge and recruit and retain top talent in an environment where public pension plans are frequent targets of state budget cuts.

New research division directors find the support of their staff is invaluable. Building successful professional relationships with legislative staff enhances a director's ability to make informed decisions, glean institutional knowledge and effectively communicate key messages, which often involves collaboration with public information staff. As is the case for many new leaders, the realization that "the buck stops here" can be intimidating. Likewise, the reality that one's expressed opinion is perceived as the opinion of the office, rather than the opinion of an individual, can be challenging.

CAPITOL SPACE ALLOCATION

The National Association of State Facilities Administrators conducted a multi-state survey on the allocation of space inside state capitols. The results of the survey revealed that these policies are as different as the states that craft them. Half of all states surveyed reported that space allocation is overseen by an outside entity, while 27 percent are overseen by a legislative entity, and 23 percent are overseen by a combination of legislative and third-party entities. Overwhelmingly, revenue generated by rent charged to tenants inside the capitol is allocated to operating expenses, which include utilities, grounds maintenance, building maintenance, security services and janitorial services. Amenities such as furnishings, technology and parking are not covered by this revenue. Seventy-five percent of states that responded to the survey reported that tenants of the state capitol are required to adhere to a master plan when renovating their allocated space.

COMMITTEE TECHNICAL TOURS

ARKANSAS RIVER & UNION PACIFIC

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORTATION & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Committee technical tour included a water tour of the Arkansas River with Mr. Gene Higginbotham, executive director of the Arkansas Waterways Commission, providing a briefing on some of the efforts by the state to develop, promote and protect waterborne transportation operations in Arkansas. The briefing included details on the state's efforts to advance intermodal transportation options along with efforts to develop the state's river ports and terminals. The Committee also visited Union Pacific's North Little Rock locomotive overhaul and maintenance operation (Jenks Shop). The facility is the largest such operation owned and operated by Union Pacific and ranks among the largest in the world. The Jenks Shop locomotive complex employs more than 1,100 skilled and dedicated workers who perform heavy maintenance on a fleet of 7,000 locomotives that pull more than 2,000 trains each day throughout the western two-thirds of the United States.

GILLAM FARMS AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Gillam Farms in Judsonia, Arkansas, owned and operated by Arkansas House Speaker-Designate Jeremy Gillam, is a family farm that began with 80 acres, but has expanded to more than 700 acres

This year's technical tours offered legislators and legislative staff an opportunity to grasp a specific understanding of programs unique to Arkansas. SLC committees visited five destinations that demonstrate the many successes of public and private sector operations in the Natural State.





dedicated to growing a variety of fruits and vegetables. With more than 300 acres of blackberries, Gillam Farms has become a leading commercial farming operation that sells its product across the United States and Canada. Gillam Farms also operates as an agriculture experiment station that provides University of Arkansas researchers the opportunity to study new fruit varieties and develop solutions for combating the growing number of plant pests and diseases. Participants received briefings from Representative Gillam, as well as from University of Arkansas scientists and county extension agents.



WHITE BLUFF ELECTRIC STEAM STATION ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The White Bluff facility is a cooperative venture that has generated power for Arkansans since 1980, burning low-sulfur coal to produce 1,659 megawatts of electricity annually. The 3,500-acre site includes 70 acres for storage of more than 1 million tons of coal. The plant's boilers are rated at 6 million pounds of steam per hour and can burn 1,000 tons of coal an hour at full load. The plant features two 400-foot tall natural draft cooling towers, a 1000-foot tall stack, and a complex coal handling system. The technical tour of the facility provided an excellent opportunity to see what is at the other end of the power lines when you flip on the light switch, featuring the power plant, boiler and control room, and briefings from officials at the facility.



STATE TRANSFORMATION IN ACTION RECOGNITION (STAR) SELECTION BOARD MEETING SUMMARY



Virginia DMV Connect



West Virginia Office of Child Nutrition

The Southern Legislative Conference (SLC), Southern Office of The Council of State Governments (CSG), has a long history of highlighting exceptional state government programs. The CSG Innovations Awards Program has recognized and promoted creative and successful state government programs and initiatives for nearly 40 years. Established in 1975 as the Innovations Transfer Program, then refined and renamed the CSG Innovations Awards in 1986, the program transitioned to the regional level in 2013. The SLC 2014 State Transformation in Action Recognition (STAR) Program is the Southern regional adaptation of the former, national CSG Innovations Awards program and seeks to identify and promote state government solutions to regional problems, focusing particularly on innovations that are creative, effective, impactful, and transferable. This year, a board of 14 judges comprising Southern state legislators, legislative staff, and governmental policy professionals, selected two winners for the 2014 STAR Program.

The first winner, *DMV Connect* of Virginia, addressed the difficulties experienced by former inmates when reintegrating into civil society when they do not hold proper state-issued identification (ID), a crucial docu-

ment for renting property, applying for jobs, and cashing paychecks. To ensure offenders exit correctional facilities with an ID card, the Virginia DMV created a portable camera system allowing their personnel to go into corrections facilities and process ID cards in real-time for inmates preparing for release. Working with state agencies within secure parameters, DMV personnel access birth certificates and other confidential records on behalf of offenders and compile all necessary documents to complete an ID application. Further, the DMV recognized that their program could be expanded to serve populations with limited mobility, and thus also began serving assisted living residences, homeless centers, and other facilities.

The second 2014 STAR recipient is the *Feed to Achieve* program administered by the Office of Child Nutrition, West Virginia Department of Education, prompted by the Feed to Achieve Act, which requires that every child is given an opportunity to eat a minimum of two nutritious meals per instructional day. The Act directs the Office of Child Nutrition to establish a public/private partnership to provide these meals, using current federal school nutrition guidelines and funding, along



with private donations. As such, the program requires no additional state funding. The Act also directs that a restricted state fund be created for gifts, grants, and donations to be used solely for increasing participation in the nutrition programs outlined in the Act. Donations are tax-deductible and donors are able to direct the use of their donations to the school nutrition program of their choice. With donations restricted to specific purposes, public/private partnerships and donor awareness have increased funding, further bolstering federal allocations.

Additionally, the Office of Child Nutrition was able to expand program participation through the use of a web-based interface that identifies eligible children based on family income. Further review found that, by creating alternatives to before-school meals, such as *grab-n-go* or allowing breakfast during first period, more children will have access to meals and thereby perform better in the classroom.

SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAMS

DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY

Chris Masingill, Delta Regional Authority, Federal Co-Chair, Mississippi

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA), created as an independent federal agency by Congress in 2000, serves 252 counties and parishes along the Mississippi River and in the Alabama Black Belt. The Delta region is one of the most historic, culturally rich parts of the country, yet life remains a struggle for many. The DRA strives to create jobs, build communities, and improve the lives of the nearly 10 million people in the Delta region.

As a federal-state partnership, the DRA works with the governors in each state to leverage economic development activity in the region. It is modeled after the Appalachian Regional Commission to concentrate regional economic development activity in one of the most distressed areas in the nation. The DRA partners with local development districts in each state to assist with the application process and, once awarded, to manage the job development projects in their state.

The States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) is the primary investment tool of the DRA, which allows SEDAP to make significant impacts in creating jobs, building communities, and improving lives



in the Delta. This program is divided into four categories: basic public infrastructure (including broadband), transportation infrastructure, small business development and entrepreneurship, and workforce training and development.

The cumulative regional results of the programs of the DRA for FY 2002 through FY 2013 have been:

- » 799 DRA Projects
- » \$119,188,005 DRA Investment
- » \$681,045,256 Other Public Investment
- » \$2,022,816,351 Other Private Investment
- » \$2,823,049,612 Overall Total Investment
- » 22.69 Total Investment Leverage Ratio
- » 9,476 Jobs Created
- » 7,855 Jobs Retained
- » 3,745 Individuals Trained for Jobs

FELONY ARRESTS AND DNA COLLECTION

Jayann Sepich, Founder, DNA Saves, New Mexico

Each day, people become victims of violent crimes. Most of these are committed by repeat offenders. By passing legislation that enables law enforcement to collect DNA from felony arrestees at the same time as fingerprints, states may be able to apprehend criminals sooner.



States have been collecting DNA from convicted felons for almost two decades, assisting in the resolution of thousands of crimes. The Katie Sepich Expanded DNA Act, federal legislation enacted in 2013, provides grant funding for the establishment and expansion of arrestee DNA testing programs through 2015. By utilizing such programs, states are able to arrest repeat offenders sooner, prevent violent crimes, exonerate the innocent, protect civil liberties, reduce criminal justice costs and reduce bias.

While often challenged on constitutional grounds, many courts throughout the country have upheld these statutes. These court decisions have been clear that the processes, procedures and benefits of collecting DNA from those arrested for violent felonies is as constitutionally sound as taking fingerprints from those same individuals. In 2013, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that DNA collection laws do not constitute a violation of the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable search and seizure.

Privacy advocates, however, argue that individuals who are arrested but not convicted should not be required to submit DNA. The American Civil Liberties Union posits that there is no need to collect DNA from arrestees, arguing that the same probable cause required to arrest a suspect will allow them to obtain a warrant to collect that person's DNA. Additionally, by law, police already are permitted to obtain DNA from persons convicted of a crime.

LITTLE ROCK
BIG THINGS HAPPEN HERE.

CONFERENCE NOTES

THOMAS B. MURPHY LONGEVITY OF SERVICE AWARD

Representative Tom Burch was first elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives in 1972 and currently is the longest-serving House member. He has served as chair of the House Health & Welfare Committee since 1985. He also serves as a member of the Licensing & Occupations Committee; Veterans, Military Affairs, & Public Safety Committee; and the Budget Review Subcommittee on Human Resources.



A Jefferson County native, Representative Burch served in the United States Navy and graduated from Bellarmine College with a degree in business administration. He retired after nearly 40 years with General Electric Corporation, where he worked as a production control manager.

Representative Burch has focused much of his public service career on strengthening government services for families and children across the Commonwealth. Many key pieces of legislation have become law under his sponsorship and guidance. He has successfully passed legislation to encourage human organ donations, to mandate a study of the homeless population in Kentucky, and to require family life and parenting education in grades K-12. He also has worked to remove barriers to employment in the public assistance program by allowing recipients to earn additional income without a complete termination of benefits; support the provision of protective services to abused and neglected children and to increase adoptions; require state and local agencies to coordinate services provided to severely emotionally disabled children; provide safe havens and supportive services for abandoned infants; and expand domestic violence prevention and treatment services.

CARTER/HELLARD LEGISLATIVE STAFF AWARD

The Carter/Hellard Award is presented to the individual whom, in the judgment of the LSA Directors Group, has demonstrated excellence and dedication in staffing service to state legislators in the South. Sheila Mason, who began working for the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission (LRC) in 1980 as a legislative analyst, was the recipient of the 2014 Award.



Beginning in 1980, Sheila's role evolved from that of researcher/performance auditor on assigned studies to project manager over multiple studies. In 1991, she was designated the committee staff administrator for the Program Review Committee and held that position until her reassignment to the LRC director's office in 1998 as the research coordinator for the agency. Sheila currently holds the positions of Record Compiler and Intern Coordinator for the agency. She coordinates LRC's civic education initiatives and, on several occasions, has organized and presided over training sessions for foreign delegations. Sheila has been a frequent panelist at national and regional legislative meetings, and has collaborated with legislative management from other states to provide on-site training to legislative research staff.

Sheila received an undergraduate degree in Business Administration from Kentucky State University, with an emphasis in economics. She also has completed certified courses offered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the General Accounting Office. She is a past recipient of the *Henry J. Toll Fellowship*, awarded by The Council of State Governments, and also NCSL's *Legislative Staff Achievement Award*. Sheila has been active in several civic and non-profit initiatives. She is the immediate past president of the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) and currently serves on the KHS Foundation Board.



CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS (CALS) ALUMNI EVENT

With the implementation of term limits in five SLC member states, and in recognition of the changing political landscape in the South, the Executive Committee of the SLC approved the establishment of the Center for the Advancement of Leadership Skills to help emerging leaders from the South develop their communication, conflict resolution, consensus building and critical decision-making skills.

CALS embodies the SLC's mission of championing excellence in state government by providing non-partisan forums for state officials who might rarely cross paths. CALS offers full scholarships for candidates from the legislative, executive and judicial branches of state government. For more information about the leadership program, visit slcatlanta.org/CALS/.

CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

For the fourth consecutive year, the Southern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting provided attendees an opportunity to earn Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credit for attending substantive sessions of SLC standing committeees. Attendees were eligible for up to 18 hours of CLE credit by attending informative sessions. For more information regarding the annual meeting CLE accreditation, contact Lauren Greer at lgreer@csg.org, or the SLC office by calling (404) 633-1866.

CONFERENCE NOTES



COMPARATIVE DATA REPORTS

Comparative Data Reports (CDRs) are prepared annually by select SLC states' fiscal research departments. Because CDRs track a multitude of revenue sources and appropriations levels in Southern states, they provide a useful tool to legislators and legislative staff alike as they determine their own state spending level priorities. The reports presented at the SLC Annual Meeting were:

- » **Education**
Hank Hager
Senate, West Virginia
- » **Medicaid**
Shawn Hotstream
Legislative Fiscal Office, Louisiana
- » **Revenue**
Andrea Barksdale
Bureau of Legislative Research,
Arkansas
- » **Transportation**
John Snyder
Legislative Research Commission,
Kentucky
- » **Adult Correctional Systems**
Stephanie Blanchard
Legislative Fiscal Office, Louisiana



Comparative Data Reports are prepared under the auspices of the Conference's Fiscal Affairs & Government Operations Committee. Reports for 2014 and previous releases, dating back to 2000, are available through the SLC website at www.slcatlanta.org/Publications/.



POLICY POSITIONS ADOPTED AT THE 68TH SLC ANNUAL MEETING

The Southern Legislative Conference adopted 10 policy positions at the 68th Annual Meeting:

- » Regarding Last-Dollar Scholarship Programs for Community and Technical Colleges
- » Regarding Federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization
- » Regarding Carbon Capture and Enhanced Oil Recovery
- » Regarding Designation of Critical Habitat for Threatened or Endangered Species
- » Regarding State Concerns Over the EPA's Proposed CO2 Emission Standards
- » Regarding State Flexibility for Carbon Dioxide Reductions
- » Regarding the EPA's Proposal to Regulate Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Existing Fossil-Fueled Power Plants
- » Regarding the EPA's Proposed CO2 Standards
- » Regarding the EPA's Recognition of the Primacy of State Regulation of Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Existing Power Plants by Recognizing State-Developed Standards
- » Regarding the Establishment of Performance Standards by States

To review these policy positions and those of previous years, please visit slcatlanta.org/policy_positions/.

Policy Positions of the Southern Legislative Conference shall sunset the first day of the following Annual Meeting. The SLC collaborated with the CSG Washington, D.C., office to forward the positions to the proper authorities.

68TH SLC ANNUAL MEETING STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

SLC STAFF

COLLEEN Cousineau	<i>slc@csg.org</i>	SLC Director; CSG Deputy Executive Director
SUJIT M. CanagaRetna	<i>scanagaretna@csg.org</i>	Fiscal Policy Manager
MIKKO Lindberg	<i>mlindberg@csg.org</i>	Policy Analyst
LORI Moore	<i>lmoore@csg.org</i>	Director of Operations & Programs
ANNE Roberts	<i>aroberts@csg.org</i>	Policy Analyst
LAUREN Greer	<i>lgreer@csg.org</i>	Policy Analyst
NEIL Johnson	<i>njohnson@csg.org</i>	Operations Coordinator

SLC ADJUNCT STAFF

SUSAN Lanter	The Council of State Governments
JOAN Minton	Consultant

HOST STATE

HOST COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS	HOST COMMITTEE
Senate President Pro Tempore Michael Lamoureux	Senator Linda Chesterfield Senator Joyce Elliott Senator Jane English Senator Keith M. Ingram Senator Missy Irvin Senator David Johnson Senator Bill Sample Senator David Sanders Senator Eddie Joe Williams
Speaker Davy Carter	Representative Eddie L. Armstrong Representative Ken Bragg Representative Mary Broadway Representative John Burris Representative Ann V. Clemmer Representative Andy Davis

HOST STATE DIRECTOR OF EVENTS

Diane B. Ayres, Arkansas House of Representatives

HOST STATE VOLUNTEERS (list provided by Arkansas Host State)

Amy Amunategui	Angie Cates	Judy Gaddy	Corlis Johnson	Jana Muldoon	<i>Representative Sue Scott</i>	Teresa Tripp
Kevin Anderson	Christina Clark	Sarah Ganahl	Lorie Johnson	Janice Nelson	Gina Seaton	Diane Turner
Swee Ang	Angie Clingmon-Reed	Kirtida Gandhi	Matthew Johnson	Roger Norman	Bre Smith	Varnaria Vickers-Smith
Bart Angel	Steve Cook	Brent Gasper	Lennon Jones	Dan Parker	Estella Smith	Tony Vogelgesang
Frank Arey	Ann Cornwell	Juanita Giles	<i>Representative Patti Julian</i>	Williams Parks	Jennifer Smith	Katie Walden
Rebecca Barfield	Jo Crews	Mandy Gillip	Paula Kinnard	Brian Phillips	Jo Smith	Scott Waller
Julie Bates	Sharon Cunningham	Butch Goldman	Kevin Koon	Cecillea Pond-Mayo	Nell Smith	Pat Wallis
Sheila Beal	Donna Davis	Sallie Graves	Norma Lasiter	Jason Poole	Pamlir Smith	Lilah Walls
Jessica Beel	Margie Davis	Emily Gruber	Joni Lee	Allison Potratz	Gerry Solzt	Gayle Walton
Jennifer Bennett	Rita Dean	Mildred Hamilton	Joi Leonard	Amber Prather	Sherri Stacks	Erica Warriner
Judy Bethea	Roy Diaz	Connie Harkin	Sabrina Lewellen	Phil Price	Carol Stapleton	Jennifer Waymack
Justin Blagg	Kaye Donham	Chrissy Heider	Vince Henderson	John Reed	Judy Steelman	Kathryn Whittamore
Chris Boggs	<i>Representative Charlotte Douglas</i>	Matthew Henry	Isaac Linam	Kim Renteria	Alix Stephens	Becca Whortton
Lori Bowen	Joann Drew	Cindy Herron	Carolyn Magrans	Rosemary Robinson	Jessica Sutton	Adrienne Williams
Barbara Brown	Kendra Drone	Linda Hill	Wanda Manees	Tony Robinson	Denise Tartar	Kim Williams
Valerie Brown	Ben Ellis	Karen Holiday	Marilyn Mathis	Lesley Rogers	Jospeh Theis	Michelle Williams
Paige Brumley	Mike Feehan	Jill Holyfield	Jody McCullen	Renie Rule	Sheri Thomas	Tammy Williams
Steve Cade	Eden Howard	Eden Howard	Angelica Mercado	Eric Sanders	Laran Thomas	Lisa Willits
Mary Cameron	<i>Representative Deborah Ferguson</i>	Mark Hudson	Jessica Middleton-Kurylo	Kathy Schmidt	Katie Thompson	Richard Wilson
Kerrie Carlock	Rita Fleming	Doris James	Erica Miller	Jim Schratz	Lance Thornton	Juanita Witham
Tim Carlock	Vicki Freeburn	Martha Jarrow	Matthew Miller	Latisha Scott	Barbara Treece	Tammy Young
Wendy Cartwright	Jason Frisbie	Buddy Johnson	Jon Moore			Darlene Younts
Jana Cason						

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The Southern Legislative Conference extends special thanks to the following friends for their generous assistance with the general and substantive committee programs for our 68th Annual Meeting. We are grateful for their continued support and interest in the Conference.

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2014-2015 CONFERENCE AND COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP



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Georgia
Chair**



**Senate President
Robert Stivers
Kentucky
Chair Elect**



**Speaker
Philip Gunn
Mississippi
Vice Chair**



**Senator
Keith M. Ingram
Arkansas
Immediate Past Chair**

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT



**Representative Andy Anders
Louisiana
Chair**

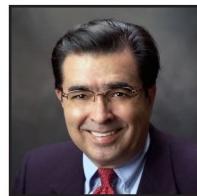


**Representative Tom McKee
Kentucky
Vice Chair**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORTATION & CULTURAL AFFAIRS



**Senator Jeff Mullis
Georgia
Chair**



**Representative Brent Yonts
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Vice Chair**

EDUCATION

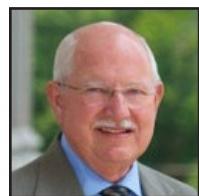


**Senator
John Unger II
West Virginia
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**Senator
Dolores Gresham
Tennessee
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**Representative
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**Marty Garrity
Director
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Chair**



**Colleen Cousineau
Director
Southern Legislative
Conference
Deputy Executive Director
The Council of State
Governments**



SOUTHERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE 69TH ANNUAL MEETING



The Annual Meeting of the Southern Legislative Conference provides policymakers with an opportunity to share their experiences with others facing similar issues across a broad spectrum. Regional and national policy experts address an array of topics germane to the Conference's six standing committees, which serve as the foundation for policy discussions.



Find out more about the Southern Legislative Conference and the 69th Annual Meeting at slcatlanta.org and slc2015.org.



SLC 70TH ANNUAL MEETING
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

In addition to the substantive programs, the Annual Meeting shines a spotlight on the Host State's year-long planning to accommodate members from across the region with special activities and events unique to both the host city and state.

The 69th Annual Meeting of the Southern Legislative Conference will be held in **Savannah, Georgia, July 18 to 22, 2015**. The Host State Committee, whose responsibilities include transportation, youth and guest programming, and all conference-wide events, will offer participants an opportunity to explore the sights, sounds, and flavors of Savannah and the Peach State.

Southern Office of
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SOUTHERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

THE SOUTHERN OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

REGIONAL VIEW NATIONAL REACH

Founded in 1947, the Southern Legislative Conference is a member-driven organization and the largest of four regional legislative groups operating under The Council of State Governments and comprises the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

The Southern Office was opened in Atlanta in 1959. Initially charged with serving all three branches of state government, the duties of the Office have evolved to providing services primarily to the more than 2,400 legislative

members, as well as staff, of its 15-state region. SLC members are appointed by the leadership of the 30 legislative chambers in the South. The SLC Annual Meeting has grown to become the largest regional gathering of state legislators in the country and attracts the largest audience of any of the CSG regional conferences.

The SLC's six standing committees provide a forum which allows policymakers to share knowledge in their area of expertise with colleagues from across the South. By working together within the SLC and participating on its committees, Southern state legislative leaders are able to speak in a distinc-

tive, unified voice while addressing issues that affect their states and the entire region.

The mission of The Council of State Governments' Southern Legislative Conference is to foster and encourage intergovernmental cooperation among its 15-member states. In large measure, this is achieved through the ongoing work of the Conference's six standing committees and supporting groups. Through member outreach in state capitols, policy research, member delegations to points of interest, meetings and fly-ins, staff support state policymakers in their work to build a stronger region.